TOWN
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HURCH

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No. 43
April, 1948

The Small Discussion and Action Group

SHIRLEY E. GREENE

• The number one problem of modern democracy and of Christian social action is the same: how to secure and maintain widespread and intelligent participation. When democracy fails to solve this problem it degenerates into bureaucracy and is on the road to dictatorship. When the Christian social action movement fails, it tends to become a marginal concern of the denominations, kept alive by the occasional oratory of a handful of top-layer theorizers.

The Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, being dedicated to Christian democracy, Christian citizenship and Christian social action, is forever seeking the most effective instruments for broadening the basis of intelligent participation by Christian people in community, national and international relations.

A Specific Project

This is a report of a specific project whose aim was to test a particular method for its effectiveness as an instrument of Christian social action, especially in the small church and the small community. The method under examination was the small discussion and action group. It was carried on in the state of Vermont in cooperation with the Vermont Congregational Conference and the Vermont Farm Bureau and with the knowledge and approval of leaders in the Vermont Church Council, the Vermont Cooperative Council, the Vermont Grange and the Vermont College of Agriculture and Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service.

Procedure

The project was launched by a presentation at each of the fall meetings of the Congregational Associations. Pastors in the Associations not holding fall meetings received a letter of information concerning the project from the State Conference office. Expressions of interest and desire to participate in the project were solicited. On the basis of these expressions, a field itinerary was developed. The remainder of the project period (seven weeks) was spent in moving from community to community meeting with small groups for an evening's discussion and explanation of the nature and purpose of the small discussion and action group.

The results, insofar as they can be summarized, have been as follows:

No. of communities expressing initial interest in project	50
No. of communities subsequently eliminating themselves	13
No. of communities unreached for lack of time	14
Total No. of Communities in which *meetings were held*	23
No. of communities in which meeting proved to be set up in relation to some pre-existing group or organization	7
No. of communities in which new groups were gathered for this purpose	16
No. of groups expressing interest in the program	16
No. of groups making *definite plans for continuation* as small discussion and action groups	14
Total No. of persons present in the 23 small group meetings	356

As this report is written some of the groups have held their second meetings and have reported plans for permanent group organization. Most have not yet held second meetings. Obviously no true measure of the permanence of results flowing from this project can be made for several months.

Characteristics

The following characteristics are drawn from observation of the successful experience of such groups as sponsored by other agencies (notably the Ohio Farm Bureau and the Vermont Farm Bureau) together with my own conclusions growing out of this project:

1. *The groups should be kept small*—small enough to meet in homes and to allow for full participation. Eight to ten families is plenty. A group may well start even smaller to allow for some expansion

as the idea catches on. If too many become interested, other groups should be formed.

2. *The groups should be family groups.* Husbands and wives should come together. Children of high school age and up should be included. Younger children, if they cannot be readily left at home, may be brought along.

3. *The groups should meet in the homes in rotation.* No other meeting place will provide the same degree of informality and congeniality. Furthermore, such an experience will tend to enrich the home life of the group.

4. *The groups should meet monthly and regularly.* Oftener than monthly will be a burden. Less than monthly will not sustain the interest. A regular meeting date will help the members to remember and to save the date. If possible summer meetings (perhaps a picnic or outing) should be held to avoid loss of momentum.

5. *The groups should be simple and informal in organization and procedure.* Chairman, discussion leader and secretary may be enough officers. It is recommended that these be elected by ballot without nominations to serve for a full season. No ritual for the meeting is recommended although a common order of procedure is Opening Devotion (brief), Business (brief, if any), discussion, refreshments, recreation.

6. *The groups should be church-sponsored, church-related, but community-centered.* The value of the non-church-related discussion groups such as the Farm Bureau Neighborhood Clubs is acknowledged. However, it is felt that these groups will do best when definitely related to some permanent agency, and for purposes of promoting *Christian* community action the normal and best relation will be to the church. Whether the groups should be related to one or more than one church locally must be determined by the present status of interdenominational or inter-faith cooperation in the community. In any case, membership in a group should not be arbitrarily limited to church members. The use of the group as a means of reaching the unchurched should be considered; but this motive should not be employed to the detriment of the group's solidarity. In all cases discussions of the group should avoid the narrowly parochial and hold as their goal *the good community.*

7. *The groups should focus mainly on local community problems.* The extremes to avoid are permanently descending to purely interchurch problems or permanently ascending into the rarified atmosphere of national and international problems. Occasional excursions in both these directions are legitimate. They should always be related to the ultimate question: "what can we do about it?" They should not be permitted to lead to permanent displacement of the principal concern of the group which is, to repeat, *the good local community.*

8. *The groups should zealously guard freedom and democracy in their discussions.* Let no person, either the discussion leader, the chairman, the minister, or the natural born debater dominate the discussion or predetermine the conclusions.

9. *The groups should achieve continuity and direction in their discussions.* Avoid jumping from topic to topic. Stay with a subject until some conclusive basis for action is achieved, even if this means several meetings on the same topic. Seek to move in discussion from analysis of problem to assessment of resources, to possible lines of action, to specific individual and group commitments. The preparation and skill of the discussion leader is the key to this problem.

10. *The groups should achieve their stability through fellowship.* Any time people begin to attend from a sense of duty, the group is doomed. This means that the group must be composed of persons who have a sense of neighborliness and a common bond of interest. It also means that each group meeting must be an enjoyable experience of fellowship.

11. *The groups should always regard action as their ultimate goal.* Discussion is valuable and justifiable only if it leads to action. The action should be Christian. It may be action taken by the group, action taken by the individual members of the group, or action induced in other community agencies as a result of pressure exerted by this group. It may even be indirect action such as a letter or telegram to your Congressman. *But there must be action.*

12. *The group may be a new group or a re-converted one.* The recommended procedure is to organize a new group among the people vitally interested in Christian community action. However, the possibility should not be excluded that a pre-existing local social action committee, an adult Bible class, a Sunday evening forum, a current events study club, a book club, a young adult group or what not may become the vehicle for this function of small group discussion and action. Unless the group in question is willing to alter its procedures and purposes to conform pretty closely to the above outline, its success as a small discussion and action group is very dubious.

Report of Insufficient Progress

• This is to report on the matter of doubling the size of *Town and Country Church* at a time of high costs, without increasing the subscription rate.

Total subscription income advanced considerably in 1947, thanks to numerous generous cooperators. But it has not advanced sufficiently to carry a 16-page issue indefinitely.

You who believe in this venture in cooperative town and country church journalism—will you consider how to help us secure a few more subscriptions in your community or county?

Then if we can get a few more in your county, the same can be done elsewhere.

Samples and circulars are always available in reasonable quantities without charge. Send us a post card for copies for a meeting.

Lonepine

The Montana Study of the Uni-ersity of Montana, Missoula, Mont., as prepared a ten-weeks' group-udy guide, entitled *Life in Mon-na, as seen in Lonepine, a small ommunity*. This is the first of a ries of study programs in com-unity service which has been pub-shed by The Montana Study in an fort to acquaint persons of different eliefs, different occupations and dif-rent training with their own com-unity and its problems, and to act operatively toward their solution.

The general contents of the study-uide were gathered by Baker Brow-ell, Joseph K. Howard and Paul Ieadows who worked under a ecial grant made to the University f Montana for this project. The heory of community improvement, s incorporated in the study, was sted at Lonepine under the aus-ices of the Montana School of Re-gion.

The plan of Community Service as grown out of a need felt by stu-ents and faculty for more direct pplication of education and practi-al living situations. The director of ne School of Religion believed that ne community church at Lonepine ffered an unusual opportunity to erform a religious experiment he ad wanted to attempt for years. In he absence of a regular community astor, the director began an exten-ion service of the Montana School f Religion by making regular week-nd visits to Lonepine—a rural com-unity, comprising about ninety amilies, eighty miles north of the Jniversity.

The program consisted of helping he people of the small Protestant hurch with a recreation and work rogram which was carried out each riday and Saturday, with the inter-hurch pastor remaining to deliver he sermon and conduct a church chool on Sunday morning. The vork plan consisted of a number of aried projects.

Each Saturday morning and after-noon approximately forty people rom all over the community devoted ome four hundred man-hours to re-

decorating the church interior and to building stone gate posts and a seventy-foot rock wall to match. Rock was brought in and cemented by members of the congregation who willingly donated trucks, cement mixers, screens and wire. Their wives provided pot-luck dinners.

Stripped to the waist just like his fellow workers, the minister took an active part in shoveling, cement mixing, screening gravel and hauling rock.

As a second phase of the program the pastor assisted in planning and re-vitalizing a community club which was formed by the inhabitants of the area.

The weekly agenda of the recreation program, which began at 7:30 o'clock each Friday evening and lasted five hours, consisted of softball games, a concert by the ten-piece school band, folk dancing, square dancing, singing, movies, games, refreshments, and business sessions on how to better community living.

The enthusiasm of the people toward their church had increased to such an extent that the pastor hoped they would offer individual thought as to some of the useful services a church of the future might perform. So, on a designated Sunday morning, the small frame church filled to capacity, the people of the community preached the sermon from the topic, "What is wrong with the Christian church today?" They told of the kind of church they wished to have—"friendly, embracing all mankind where petty fuss and different dogmas are forgotten"; "one that would serve the entire community and take part in the many activities of the community"; "a church that practically everybody in the community would attend and support"; "a church that would be a vital influence for good in the community."

The closing remark by the last speaker was significant. He said: "All Christian churches should forget their petty differences and join together to mould the thought of the world and to lead in the great movements of the future. A united Christian front today might alleviate the need for a battleground tomorrow."

The people had preached the sermon.

Would such a project work in an area that had no community spirit? The real test of the value of such a project would be whether it could help a disorganized community to attain something of integration and community spirit, and to express this in some cooperative effort.

The Montana Study is designed to help others to stabilize their communities, and to enrich the lives of those in them.

—Ruth B. Robinson

Conservation Week

PAUL BESTOR

• The national organization, Friends of the Land, is sponsoring an all-out conservation week starting May 2nd. This particular day was selected to start the program because it is the recognized rural life or rogation Sunday in both Protestant and Catholic churches. Our organization desires to cooperate closely with all churches on this occasion and in future programs because of the common cause which we have in the conservation of "Soil and Souls."

Friends of the Land will ask their members as well as many other groups to help make Rural Life Sunday a nationally recognized day. This will be the start of a full fledged Conservation Week where stewardship of the land will receive the attention which it deserves.

A Group of Citizens

Friends of the Land is an organization of citizens interested in the proper and permanent use of soil, water, forests, wild life and other resources. It is a non-profit, non-partisan society and is supported entirely by memberships. It is the purpose of our organization to focus the attention of all people on the absolute need for the conservation of natural resources to the end that proper conservation will be a reality on every acre of America's land.

All people, regardless of their position or place in life, have a vital stake in natural resources. The physical needs of mankind are, in every instance, processed or raw products of the land. Our food, clothing, shelter, transportation, our luxuries and our needs come from the bountiful providence of the Almighty, through the agency of the Land. Although we may find a substitute for one resource when it is depleted, such as the use of wood and plastics for steel, we must turn to some kind of natural resource for our requirements. This is particularly true of the use of the products of the soil, our most basic natural resource.

Throughout the eons of time man has forgotten his relationship and dependence on the source of his physical needs. History is full of the stories of fallen and forgotten nations because the land was depleted and wasted. Many areas of the old Biblical land offer some of the best examples of the erosion of soil and man. Much of Moses's land of milk and honey is today a region of rocks, goats and impoverished peasantry; where the soil has gone man has gone with it.

Importance of Soil

In our United States we have outdone all other nations in sending our soil to the sea—in the overcropping of our land, in the removal of our forests and wild life and the depletion of much of our natural resources. This is not an indictment of our ancestors or of any particular group. It is merely a fact which we must recognize. We still have ample resources left at our disposal, but we have no surplus for further waste and exploitation. Every grain of productive soil must be cherished and used for the betterment of mankind.

Forests can be perpetual if the growth is removed, but not when the basic foundation permitting reforestation is destroyed. We can and will have ample wild life when we restore the cover and food which we have so rampantly destroyed. Coal and oil and iron cannot be grown, but if the soil is maintained and kept on America's farms, it can supply many of the products formerly secured from minerals.

And America is awakening to this vital need—the conservation of soil, water and all other resources. Soil conservation districts are rapidly covering the country. Schools are beginning to teach that it is just as important to know the resources of a state as it is to know its capitol.

City People Concerned

People in towns and cities are gradually recognizing that this whole proposition of soil conservation has more significance to them, by far, than it has to the farmer. They must exist from the products of the land. Although the farmer can always eke out an existence for himself and family, city populations are utterly dependent upon a permanent soil and continued abundant production of food.

Yes, a start has been made, but only a start. The people who organized Friends of the Land recognized this and charted the course of the Society toward the goal of arousing the interest of all people in the permanent use of resources. In our recommended program to our chapters, and through our national avenues of publicity, we are suggesting that *May 2nd* be a day of recognition of the relationship of productive soil and the welfare of Man.

There are many things which churches may be interested in doing. Of course sermons on the subject are very appropriate. So are Sunday school lessons. Sunday evening discussion periods can be developed around a central theme of land stewardship and its correlation to human betterment. Perhaps in some locations Sunday afternoon tours to the country to observe conservation farming or the results of land exploitation will fit in with the community program.

During the Week

During other days in the week of *May 2nd* we are hopeful that schools will feature conservation, that forums and speeches on the subject will be held, that the people of the community will take to the fields to view for themselves some of the things which have been discussed. It will be a week crammed full of God's beauty and of all the things which He has provided for us. Supplementing in a way the work of the Clergy in the uplifting of Man, Friends of the Land is striving for Man's proper use of the resources which God has provided so that Man, himself, can secure a more bountiful life. Our cause is common, our interests mutual. We believe that every clergyman and every conservationist will want to see that *May 2nd* is a rich day and that the following week be one of much interest and activity in the conservation of natural resources.

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Southern Seminary Programs

HENRY W. McLAUGHLIN

• The South is rural. The area served by the Presbyterian Church, U. S. has many cities with a population of over 2,500, but 62.7% of the people of the South is rural. In the past the Presbyterian Church, U. S. has put emphasis on work in the cities. We find that only 37.3% of the population is urban, but 68.1% of the Presbyterian, U. S. Church membership is in churches located in the cities or in only 37.3% of the population.

The vast majority of our churches are rural but, with few exceptions, small as they report only 31.1% of our total church membership. The Presbyterian Church, U. S. has three times as many members per 1000 of the population in its urban areas as it has in its rural. Presbyterians have neglected the country people.

We have left uncultivated our most productive fields. Most of our candidates for the ministry and missionary service were rural-born, or children of parents reared in country churches. Many of the lay leaders of the city churches come from the country.

The theological seminaries of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. have recently inaugurated movements that will do much to remedy present conditions. It looks toward a more adequate training for the rural ministry. This is a program which should mean much for the promotion of the cause of Christ and the Presbyterian Church.

Louisville Seminary

Louisville Seminary was the first to put the project into operation. Rev. C. Morton Hanna is the professor of Rural Church Work. Dr. Hanna reports his program as follows:

"1. To arouse in all members of the student body a vital concern for the spiritual welfare of people living in rural areas.

"2. To challenge a number of choice men to dedicate their lives to the services of the church in rural America.

"3. To guide a select group of choice men into the discovery of the most effective techniques.

"These objectives are to be reached in varied ways:

"1. All members of the student body are encouraged to read the stimulating literature of rural life.

"2. All men are offered the opportunity of taking special courses in the rural church.

"3. A select group of from six to nine students work with the professor of Rural Church in the Todd-Dickey Rural Training Parish. Here they experiment in the use of a variety of methods of enriching the program. This Parish is composed of thirteen churches of varying size and type, and so offers an ideal laboratory for experimentation. A few men are encouraged to do research in the problems of Rural Life, at the graduate level."

Union Theological Seminary

The second seminary to inaugurate the enterprise is Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va. Rev. James Appleby is professor of the Department of Field Work. He reports his plans as follows:

"1. Special emphasis is being placed on importance of work in our town and country fields. We have been able to have a part in the formation of one larger parish under the leadership of Rev. R. G. Hutcheson. Four students are working under his supervision, each being in charge of a rural church. They spend each Saturday and Sunday working in them, and have a conference with Mr. Hutcheson on Monday.

"2. Some students at the Assembly's Training School for Lay Workers have been enlisted in this parish. It is our hope to form additional parishes and give students opportunity for training in rural work where the Kingdom of God may be

advanced by a more effective rural program. Headway has already been made.

"3. A survey has been made in a community near Richmond looking toward the establishment of a chapel. Other surveys are projected.

"4. Definite experiences in evangelism will be given to the students. Every effort is made to interest them in this important business of the Kingdom.

"5. A larger percentage of the students are engaged in field experiences than ever before. Every effort is being made to encourage both students and churches to do some definite extension work.

"6. Special classes will be taught to prepare men for country church and home mission pastorates."

Columbia Theological Seminary

Rev. Cecil A. Thompson has recently been added to the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. He writes of his plans as follows:

"1. A letter was sent to the Home Mission Chairmen and Superintendents of Presbyteries in our five controlling Synods (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina), asking each Presbytery to select two country church pastors and pay their travel expenses to the Seminary to attend the Rural Pastor's Conference and Smyth Lectures held this year, April 21-26. Progressive plans were formed for a future program of action.

"2. We had a number of men from small churches for the School on Home Visitation Evangelism in January. This provided helpful and effective training in evangelism. This reached a large number of men from the smaller churches.

"3. We are working toward a Synod's Presbyterian Rural Church Fellowship which will be composed of pastors of town and country churches and outstanding Presbyterian laymen who are men of influence from the fields of agriculture, textiles, and other related industries.

"4. We plan to work out a financial program which will make it possible for some of our men who are definitely interested in country church work to equip themselves in this field by taking advanced or postgraduate study. In order to supply the churches of which these men are pastors, we plan to have the seminary students take over the work for one quarter or more while the pastors do this postgraduate work. This will encourage men to enter the field of rural church work and enlarge the leadership which we have.

"5. We hope to have a meeting of laymen and rural pastors for all day or overnight rallies, and rural institutes, perhaps beginning in the Synods of Georgia and South Carolina. The purpose of these rallies is inspiration and education. We hope to use speakers from the departments of agriculture, the colleges of agriculture, and other agricultural centers, as well as leaders in rural church work.

"6. We plan to have a course of instruction on country church work in the seminary. We are building up a library in the field of rural church work such as has been done in other institutions. Our first regular course will be given in 1947.

"7. Certain Rural Pastoral projects are being made available now for us to use for experimental fields with recent graduates. These fields will cooperate with this department and receive in return supervision from the Field Director."

Austin Theological Seminary

Dr. David L. Stitt, President of Austin, Texas, Theological Seminary, reports that there is under consideration the securing of a professor to undertake student supervision and training in the field of rural work. He says, "While we are not yet ready to engage such a man, we are thinking in that direction."

The Next Issue

• In the next issue we expect to present fairly complete announcements of the plans for the National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country, to be held at San Jose, California, November 9-11, 1948.

The Creating God

STANLEY U. NORTH

• "In the beginning God created the earth and God saw that it was good." Pearl Buck more than anyone else has popularized the phrase "the good earth." The Chinese, who is much closer to the soil than is the average American, is more keenly aware of his dependence upon the soil than are we who live out of cans and who are inclined to lose our sensitiveness with regard to agricultural processes.

As we open a can of string beans, or of peas, I suspect we rarely think of the farmer plowing, harrowing, and fertilizing his field, in preparation for the seeds to be planted, and much less do we think of the migrant farm laborer, the fathers and the mothers and their children, who live a nomadic and under-privileged life to the end that we may open our cans and grow fat.

Modern Processes of Life

Nor do we give much more thought to the canning process, with its thousands of hands sorting and washing the food, in preparation for the sterilizer and the container. It is not that we are calloused, but rather that we are far removed from the process. And therefore, it is good that there are those who call our attention to and quicken our consciences with reference to the humble, but very important, laborer and his family who makes possible our daily bread.

As we work together we shall do well to place an emphasis upon the God-created goodness of the earth. The good earth gives us everything. We ourselves came from the earth and shall return to it.

The Earth Remains Good

Not only the food we eat, but the water we drink, the clothes we wear, the houses that give us shelter, the fuel that gives us warmth—these all are of the earth. Nor is there anything modern that is not of the earth. The newspaper is of the earth, so is the moving picture and the radio. The steam engine and the auto-

nobile are of the earth. So, too, is he airplane, which hurls itself apart rom the earth, none-the-less of it nd has no meaning apart from it. The airplane suggests aspects of the arth that are ominous rather than ood. The bomber and the battle- hip; guns and torpedoes are as much f the earth as are an altar and its ross.

Is the earth less than the good arth, therefore? The answer is NO. God saw that it was good and it re- nains good. Earthquakes, hurri- anes, tornadoes, floods—all are a art of the creative process out of which the earth has become inhabit- able.

Warfare, too, is of the good earth. It is nature's penalty exacted for the transgression of earth's goodness. The creating God is deadly in earn- est. Either man will conform to the goodness of the earth or be destroyed. If this be true—then our task is of the utmost importance.

In Harmony With Goodness

And in the performance of our task we need to have one basic con- cern, namely, that we are in har- mony with the goodness with which God endowed the earth. The record has it that God created man in his own image—not the white man but MAN—red man, black man, yellow man, brown man—to a degree not one iota less than the white man. All came from the common earth—all shall return thereto.

It is our Christian faith, however, that man is God-like in terms of his soul rather than of his physical body. It is the genius of creation that man who has emerged from the good earth shall achieve for himself an eternal soul.

To this high purpose our several churches are engaged. Sectarian pettiness has no place among us. Seg- regation is a denial of our sacred trust. Racial discrimination and ex- ploitation are sins against God and his GOOD earth. Greed and hatred, issuing in war, however idealized and glamourized, are a violation of God's sacred creation. God speaks to us through the prophet, just as he did to another generation which put great store in its religious observ- ances as it remained unmoved by commonplace human misery:

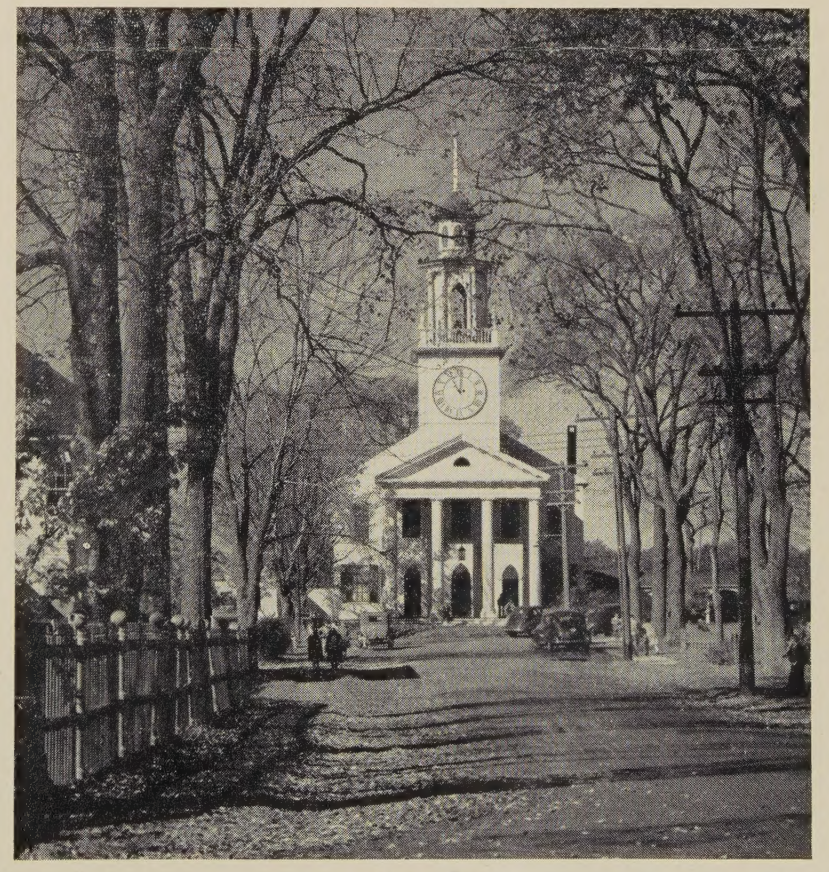
"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? . . . . Bring no more vain oblations. . . . Incense is an abomination unto me. . . . Your appointed feasts my soul hateth. . . . I will not hear you— your hands are full of blood. Wash you. Make you clean. Put away the evil of your doing from before my eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the op- pressed. Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow. . . . If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword."

PRAYER:

Eternal God, Creator of the uni- verse, all wise and all powerful—who didst see fit to fashion man in thine own image, grant that we may be worthy of Thy concern by being willing partners in the ongoing crea- tive process.

Forgive us, we pray thee, that we have so timidly followed the leading of Thy spirit. We remain separated, despite the prayer of our master that we might all be one. We put greater store on creedal differences than we do on the fundamental truth of Thy inclusive love, revealed through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Endow us, we beseech Thee, with the adventurous and courageous spirit of the reform- ers. Forbid that tradition shall blind us to the new truth and new patterns of life any more than it blinded them.

May this gathering, O God, trans- late the pious phrases so easily utter- ed and so frequently unrelated to life, into vital and sincere pro- nouncements, aggressively imple- mented to the end that thy Kingdom for which we so often pray shall come among men from one end to the other of Thy Good Earth. We raise our prayer in the name of Jesus. (Delivered before the Home Missions Council of North America, 1948.)



Congregational Church at Kennebunkport, Me. *A. Devaney, Inc., N. Y.*

A Town Church Council

• The community of Mifflinburg, Pa., a town of about 2,000 persons, recently felt the need for a united Christian organization. The story of its activities have been told by Thomas M. Musser in the *Pennsylvania Christian News.*

The Mifflinburg Council of Churches was organized about one year ago.

Aims of the Council of Churches, as presented in the preamble to the Constitution, are: to put the Christian religion at the very heart of our community life; to strengthen the agencies now operating to secure the highest spiritual, educational and humanitarian values; to coordinate the activities of the churches in their community-wide enterprises, and to develop a citizenry alive to the issues that confront American life and dedicated to the purpose of the realization of the Kingdom of God in our local community, as well as in the world community.

To assist in the achieving of these aims, the Council has been organized with the following departments for the purposes indicated:

Law and Order—To study proposed legislation and to organize church members in appropriate action.

Social Services—To include responsibility for leadership in discovering the social needs of the community and to bring about constructive changes in social conditions.

National and International Affairs—To consider national and international policies in which the Christian Churches are interested.

Christian Education—To promote and supervise all community religious educational enterprises.

Church Drama and Pageantry—To bring the churches together in dramatic activities in order to celebrate, and to develop an appreciation of events of great religious significance.

Boys and Girls Work—To develop the moral and religious enterprises of youth.

All of the departments have been active and have accomplished much in their various activities. Most outstanding has been the work of the Youth Council. Composed of two youth members from each of the five churches of the town, the Youth Council has sponsored four "praise" services for the young people. Each service, planned and executed entirely by youth, has been successful and the value has increased with the enthusiasm of youth for the project.

Two of the youth services were devoted to a variety of religious music and a third musical program presented the Lenten cantata, "The Glory of the Cross." The other program was held on Thanksgiving, when Robert Shoemaker, a sophomore in high school, gave a very challenging talk.

Values which can never be measured in human standards have been accomplished by our Council of Churches in its brief history. With God's help, we look forward to the fulfilling of His purposes more fully in Mifflinburg through the united efforts of Christian Churches.

Has the Big City Defeated You?

• Dr. Frederick K. Stamm, minister of the First Congregational Church, Chicago, recently delivered a radio address, under the auspices of the National Broadcasting Company, on the above question.

"Anyone who lives in a city knows what a big assignment Christianity has. The city can and does do something to multitudes of people. In fact, the city has not only done something to city people, but the tides of an urban and impersonal way of life have swept out over the villages and countrysides. The remotest rural area is dependent upon the city products—electric milkers, flashlights, tractors, refrigerators, and radios—all of which force the rural dweller into the same standard of living and into the same servitude to material things as his city cousin. We all dwell together and are forced into the same mechanized pattern and dominated by its influence.

"A man such as Abraham in the long ago had a hard time trying to spiritualize cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, and Christianity today has a hard time holding its own in the lives of people who are caught in the confusion of an urban civilization. One doesn't need to be in a city half so long as I have been without seeing the defeat that is written on the faces of multitudes. . .

"I suppose that the first defeating thing in the lives of a great number of people in a city is the loss of sense of worth. To a large extent a city is impersonal. What does one person count, whether he is well or poorly dressed, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, when he gets on a subway train or an elevated, or mingles with the throng on a city's streets? I remember hearing Dr. Charles E. Jefferson of the Broadway Tabernacle here in New York talk about this just as he was coming to the close of his work. He was widely known and the Tabernacle is no mean church. He said, however, that one day he stood on a street corner a block away from his church and talked to people as they passed. Not a single person knew him, and when he asked where the Broadway Tabernacle was, no one knew. If it went this way with him, how does it go with lesser lights? With the exception of family and friends, in our relations with one another we seem in a city to have become an anonymous people."

Ministers in Prosperity Grange

• Prosperity Grange in Washington County, Pennsylvania, is very proud of the fact that among its active members are four ministers who have parishes within the jurisdiction of this Grange. More and more rural clergymen are joining the home Grange and actively participating in its work; they find many directions in which the church and the Grange can unite in a common program of community improvement. Many Grange chaplains are clergymen and, taking the country as a whole, a considerable number of local pastors are filling the master's chair in the Grange of their vicinity.

—*The Rural New-Yorker*

The Rural Church and the City Church

THOMAS ALFRED TRIPP

The use of the rural designation or churches is a sociological consideration and represents the application of sociology. It is well-recognized that the church as a social institution reflects its community and cultural environments. Just as the urban church is a mirror of the city, the rural church is a reflection of farm and village culture.

The problem is, can the rural church—which is, by nature, enmeshed in the materialistic culture of town and country neighborhoods be sufficiently self-analytical, socially pertinent and theologically rigorous so that it will not only reflect its surrounding culture, but challenge its community with a Christian dynamic?

The importance of developing an adequate rural church policy is at least two-fold. First, it is necessary for rural people if they are to have effective religious services. At present, many farmers and village people have no church that they recognize as their own or which claims them in any parish. Country churches, for instance, are closed because an enlarging business zone and other factors have made a new enlarged community.

This enlargement works satisfactorily as far as economic, educational, recreational and other purposes are concerned. But the church frequently lags in enlisting and serving the farmers beyond the end of the sidewalks or village limits. Even where the outlying church is not closed, too frequently the rural church does such a poor job that the rural citizen is underprivileged religiously. So, a sound rural church program is needed for the rural church people themselves.

Second, the city church has a stake in the rural church. The relatively higher birth rates on farms and in villages creates a "surplus" population in rural areas. They migrate to the cities by necessity. Furthermore, the increased efficiency of agricultural production, due to the use of continuously improved farm machinery, farm management, animal-breeding, plant-breeding and other factors, requires progressively less laborers on the farm. Consequently, there is still more reason for migration to the cities.

The urban church does or should receive these rural migrants, many of whom reach the city at their most productive years, both economically and professionally. They frequently are among the business and professional leaders of the city. They become the class of people whom typical city churches seek. The probability of enlistment of these former rural citizens in city churches depends, in part, upon their previous religious training in country and village churches. It follows, then, that for the sake of the urban church an adequate rural policy is needed.

Statistics Are People

ELEANOR DURHAM

• From Bangor, Maine, to Macon, Georgia, to Helena, Montana, the newspaper reader is faced almost daily by statistics which make him catch his breath: "285 persons frozen to death in Berlin this winter," "Anglo-American zones forced to cut food rations from 1,550 calories to 1,150, with only 600 calories in some districts," "Infant mortality rate 16% in Berlin," "Minimum estimate of refugees in Germany now placed at 13 million—DP's at 800,000," "50% of pre-war living quarters in Germany now available."

"Terrible! How can man live like that," he sighs as he glances once more at the figures and then turns the page to find out who won the football game. The statistics are a mass of people—yes—but people worlds away, not at all like himself.

What Are The Figures?

But what are these figures? They're a lad who at the age of twelve is a professional beggar and thief, trying by these means to provide enough food for his crippled mother, younger sister and himself.

They're an expectant mother, knocking at the door of a relief office in Heidelburg. Her home was in Pomerania, from which she was expelled. Her husband was killed when he went back in search of clothes at their old house in order that the young one would have enough to keep warm when he arrived. She has TB . . . has had insufficient food for the past year. And what chance has the little one?

They are a group of 160 German families, expelled from Czechoslovakia, living together in a former air-raid shelter. One of these families consists of an old couple over seventy years of age, their only possession—the rags in which they are clothed. Their sole desire is to die soon. Next to them is a family of six, also refugees. The woman lies on her straw-sack, very ill, but there's no place for her in the hospital. The only possessions of the family are wooden boxes, serving every imaginable kind of purpose. They were Anti-Nazis, but that makes no difference for their ancestors were Germans.

They're a group of young boys, sleeping wherever they can, living by whatever means possible. These are not just statistics in a newspaper, but millions of hearts and souls in reality, beating, longing for a chance to hope. They lost in the war, a war for freedom and democracy, but now freedom and democracy is not theirs.

The desert of human misery and nihilism is vast beyond possible description, and even the most carefully selected words can not carry the emotional depth of the situation.

But planted here and there in Germany are trees of hope, sewn through the understanding and kindness of more fortunate German citizens and by Christians throughout the world, administered by Hilfswerk, the German Protestant Relief Agency. The story of its establishment will long be told; stories of the personal sacrifice of its founders as they lived and died to establish an effective relief organization, capable of functioning the moment fighting ceased.

The Brick Rural Life School

FRED L. BROWNLEE

• A tenant farmer leaned against the doorjamb of a cotton gin watching the movements of the machinery. Dejection was in his face, his posture, and the very hang of his clothes. There was homely truth in his words, however, when a stranger watching the same scene asked, "What did you get for your cotton?" "De ducks' got all my cotton," said the farmer.

"The man (loan merchant) give me my account and he said, 'de duck' for furnish (food), 'de duck' for fertilizer, 'de duck' for interest, and 'de duck' for him. Bye and bye there wasn't enough to care for all 'de ducks.' So I just figure 'de ducks' got everything again. It's that way year after year. Seem like I never break even." Such is the vicious result of the sharecropping system.

How It Started

At the Brick Rural Life School near Enfield, North Carolina, a group of farmers have been working their way out of debt. The story began in 1890 when Mrs. Joseph K. Brick, a Congregationalist of Brooklyn, New York, was listening to an agent of Howard University make an appeal for money. While he was speaking she kept thinking about a large plantation in North Carolina which she had inherited from her husband.

In a later conversation with the speaker, Mrs. Brick offered to give the farm to Howard provided a school was started there. The agent, disappointed that no money was forthcoming, referred Mrs. Brick to Augustus F. Beard, Corresponding Secretary of the American Missionary Association. As a result of their conference, Mrs. Brick deeded the farm to the Association and planned with Dr. Beard for the building of a school.

From a simple rural elementary institution the Joseph K. Brick School grew into a high school and later added the first two years of college. All the while it specialized in agriculture, farm industries and homemaking.

North Carolina had progressed educationally much further than any of the southern states. There were four denominational colleges for Negroes, a promising state agricultural and mechanical college, three state teacher-training colleges in the making, and the hope (since realized) of developing at a later date a state college of liberal arts. The State Department of Education was encouraging public education for both races throughout the state and was prepared to pay the salaries of teachers for a centralized high school at Bricks, if the three counties whose boundaries converge at the Brick Farm should be disposed to administer the work.

The High School

The school superintendents of Halifax, Nash and Edgecomb Counties agreed to do so. With this very hopeful outlook the American Missionary Association closed Brick Junior College and cooperated with the boards of education in establishing the high school by granting the use of buildings and land, providing partial salaries of several teachers for three years, and helping to purchase buses. Ten years of experience in this cooperative venture has proved so successful that the three counties and the Association are erecting a modern school building, costing $100,000, on ten acres of land deeded by the Assocation not to one county but to three, thus establishing a new first in the Association's history.

With the public school an assured success, the Association turned its attention to the plantation and its tenant farmers. Ideas about adult rural education and cooperative enterprises had become familiar through the John C. Campbell Folk School at Brasstown, North Carolina, which the Association had helped to create a few years previously.

Let Tenants Decide

It was decided that sharecroppers and tenants knew more about sharecropping and tenancy than any group of teachers who had graduated from college, no matter how good their training in economics. The Association, therefore, determined to let the tenants work out their own problems. Guidance would be given when requested. Otherwise the people, through the pooling of their ideas and that of their leader, who was himself a dirt farmer, would find their own solutions.

The Brick Rural Life School, as the new enterprise has been named, was started in 1934. The tenant farmers were to live at Bricks for the five year period. During that time they would be known as students of the Brick Rural Life School. "Classes" would be in the homes and in the fields, the "students" learning to do the common things of life uncommonly well. To that end the plantation was virtually put at their disposal, with the understanding that henceforth tenant rentals would be plowed back into an adult education program of their own making. The Association would provide only the funds for the services of one leader. Wise and patient guidance was found in the person of Mr. Neill A. McLean, a Hampton Institute graduate and former teacher of agriculture.

The Credit Union

The first effort to do one particular task cooperatively came when the credit union was organized in 1936. It started with thirty-four members who gradually built their savings up to sixty-eight dollars. While there was little money, the little which the people did have they refused to deposit because they did not trust each other. Then one day lightning struck a barn, killing the livestock. Mr. McLean showed what it would mean if the owner had to borrow money from professional moneylenders.

In the emergency the credit union savings, plus whatever additional amounts could be secured, were taken to make the first loan at a reasonable rate of interest. When the obligation was paid promptly because "it makes one feel cheap to be

n debt to the man next door," the group began to believe in themselves. Farming practices improved to such an extent that ten families pooled funds to buy a $3,800 tractor with equipment complete for plowing, planting, harrowing, sawing wood, grinding feed and meal, and picking peanuts.

The cooperative store, started in 1938, did a business of $7,000 that year; $30,000 in 1944. Whereas a decade ago the people were not very neighborly, they now rate each other annually on their ability as farmers, on how well they cooperate with each other, and whether each is a responsible member of the community. No one is asked to become a resident-student without first being "interviewed" and rated by the other farmers. No one may be asked to leave before the end of the five-year period except by consent of the group.

Land Purchase

The most baffling problem is that of land purchase. It is hard for one whose farm is small to make a living, and much harder for one whose skin happens to be dark. He must fight all the battles of small landholders, plus those of race prejudice. Those who do succeed in getting a foothold are forced only too often to purchase marginal land. Poor land means poor crops, debt, mortgage, foreclosure, tenancy. In the face of this, however, little colonies are springing up here and there. Through cooperation they are making good against great odds. This gives the timid courage to try. The credit union now has capital deposits large enough so that its first major loan for land purchase has been made.

To awaken thinking, re-train habits and enliven living, the short term session was begun for the local farmers and more distant young adults who might come to live, work and study in one of the old dormitories and on the farm during the slack winter season. Work in these sessions was unhampered by such artificial stimulants as unit credits for admission, grades recorded by teachers, certificates or diplomas on graduation.

Registration is open to any young adult farmer who wants to come, no matter how much or how little schooling he may have had. The main question is, does he want to come of his own free will? If he does, his wants are sure to multiply until at the end of six or eight weeks he is eager to get back on the farm and put new ideas to work.

The Brick tenants now have their own cows, hogs and chickens. In addition, they have fine gardens, with a wide variety of vegetables for immediate use or canning. Through the use of the cooperatively owned canning equipment, the women are able to line shelf after shelf in their pantries with canned vegetables and meat for the winter. Thinking all along the line began to pay, and thinking and working together paid even better. Such were the grades that were used in marking progress, saving time for teachers and eliminating the necessity for a registrar. Academic transcripts were filed in the minds of the students, which is where they belong.

Seed Thoughts

One of the most valuable seed thoughts to be planted at the short term sessions had to do with health. Talk on that subject went on for over two years before the seed really took root, which was just as well, as measured by results. This time the seed seems to have been an acorn. The branches of a sturdy oak, which has been growing steadily, are likely to support a district hospital in the future.

No one single factor influences the quality of rural life more than religion. The rural minister has an opportunity and an influence which he often fails to sense, or does not know how to use intelligently. The religious life of the Bricks area followed the usual pattern. When the college was in session, community folk attended the preaching services because they wanted to be part of the student group. When the college closed, no common interest remained. They went to their own denominational churches several miles distant. After the broadening discussions of the Short Term Sessions, but more particularly when people learned to have faith in each other, religion became a part of everyday life rather than just a weekly church service. A united community church was begun. Into the charter was written the provision that it is to "develop and maintain a program of religious activities, based on and growing out of our community life."

Ministers from the area are beginning to see that religion is economics and health, beauty and fun, as well as prayer and preaching. A number of years ago they began an annual two-week institute at Bricks. Ways of making the teachings of Jesus meaningful in community life were studied. As many as 250 ministers and lay workers attended. Not only did one notice the change in church properties with their fresh coats of paint and landscaped surroundings, but there were better sermons and growing programs of weekday activities.

The preachers have begun to realize that they must catch up with their members.—From a chapter in the book, *New Day Ascending,* Pilgrim Press, used by permission.

Purposes of This Journal

The purposes of this Journal are:

A. To encourage cooperation among rural churches.

B. To improve the administration of the local church, this to include organization of the church, finance, religious education, community relationships, and the training of lay leadership.

C. To stimulate the development of a Christian philosophy of rural life, this to embrace ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government programs; and the content of the minister's message.

Part of Larger Program

The Journal is an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program" that will encourage a national "rural church movement."

Report for the Year 1947
The Committee on Town and Country

The Committee on Town and Country is an inter-council agency, constituted jointly by the Home Missions Council of North America, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the International Council of Religious Education. The program of the Committee is mainly that of furthering cooperation among those who administer services in behalf of the town and country church. These cooperative activities, during the year 1947, were carried out as follows:

1. The Convocation

The fourth National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country was held in Rochester, New York, November 4-6. The Convocation brings together those most concerned with the town and country church. These persons worship together, educate one another, and make plans and recommendations. The Convocation is a study conference or a forum—not an executive body. More than 700 persons registered for the Convocation, and many more attended.

A preliminary report of the Convocation was published in the December issue of the periodical, *Town and Country Church.* A pamphlet report will be printed later, as usual. This printed report will include the deliberations of eighteen commissions which considered many aspects of the local program of the town and country church. The next Convocation will be held in San Jose, California, November 9-11, 1948.

2. In-Service Training

Since the year 1912 the Committee has encouraged In-Service Training. This has been offered at various colleges and theological seminaries. The various short courses are mainly for ministers and their wives. The length of the usual course varies from five to ten days although several institutions now offer thorough graduate courses for credit, covering four to six weeks. This In-Service Training is administered by the institutions themselves. They determine the curricula and choose the faculty.

The Committee stands ready to advise with respect to curricula and faculty, and many of the denominational rural church officers teach in the schools. These latter years schools have been held during many months of the year and not simply in the summer as was the case when the program was begun. Forty-seven schools were listed in the annual circular issued in 1947 by the Committee.

3. Worship Programs

In November the Commission on Worship of the Federal Council published, in cooperation with the Committee on Town and Country, a 128 page booklet entitled "Hymns of the Rural Spirit." This is being widely distributed among the churches interested in having a supplemental hymnal with Christian hymns having a rural emphasis. It is expected that the new hymnal will find a place in the local churches and, also, that it will be useful in many conferences, camps, festivals, etc. We believe it will be especially useful in connection with observances of Rural Life Sunday, the fifth Sunday after Easter, and with annual Harvest Festivals.

The Committee issues annually an order of service for Rural Life Sunday which is observed on Rogation Sunday, the fifth after Easter, or on any other Sunday during the spring of the year.

The Committee publishes an order of service for a Harvest Festival every year. Harvest Festivals are observed in the local churches between the months of August and November. The Committee recommends that a Harvest Festival be held in a local church separate from the national Thanksgiving.

4. The Periodical, Town and Country Church

At a meeting held in Des Moines in the fall of 1946 the Committee on Town and Country decided to double the size of the periodical, *Town and Country Church,* without increasing the subscription rate. Considering the nature of the times and increased printing costs this was indeed a venture of faith. We are happy to report that up to the time when this report was prepared the response from the persons for whom *Town and Country Church* is published has been very favorable.

Many cooperators have come forward to assist in promoting the journal, and to send us items for publication. It appears that soon we may have enough receipts from subscriptions to pay for the increased cost of printing. The maintenance of a periodical involves considerable responsibility, however. Only continued cooperation from many boards and individuals can insure the success of the periodical. *There is no central fund for promotion.*

(The purposes of *Town and Country Church* are printed on another page of this issue.)

5. Collaboration with other Agencies

The Committee has long carried on varied informal collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, the farm organizations, and social agencies interested in rural improvement, with other committees of the three councils.

6. Field Services

The Committee serves, as time permits, the state Councils of Churches in the holding of conferences, and endeavors to maintain contacts with state agricultural colleges.

7. Study of the Rural Church Situation

The Committee actively cooperates with the inter-council Committee for Cooperative Field Research. The sub-committee on Land Tenure of the Committee on Town

ınd Country works closely with the Farm Foundation in studies of the hurch and the family-type farm. A horough report is expected from his sub-committee in the near future.

Edwin L. Becker, Chairman
Benson Y. Landis, Secretary
Don F. Pielstick, Associate Secretary

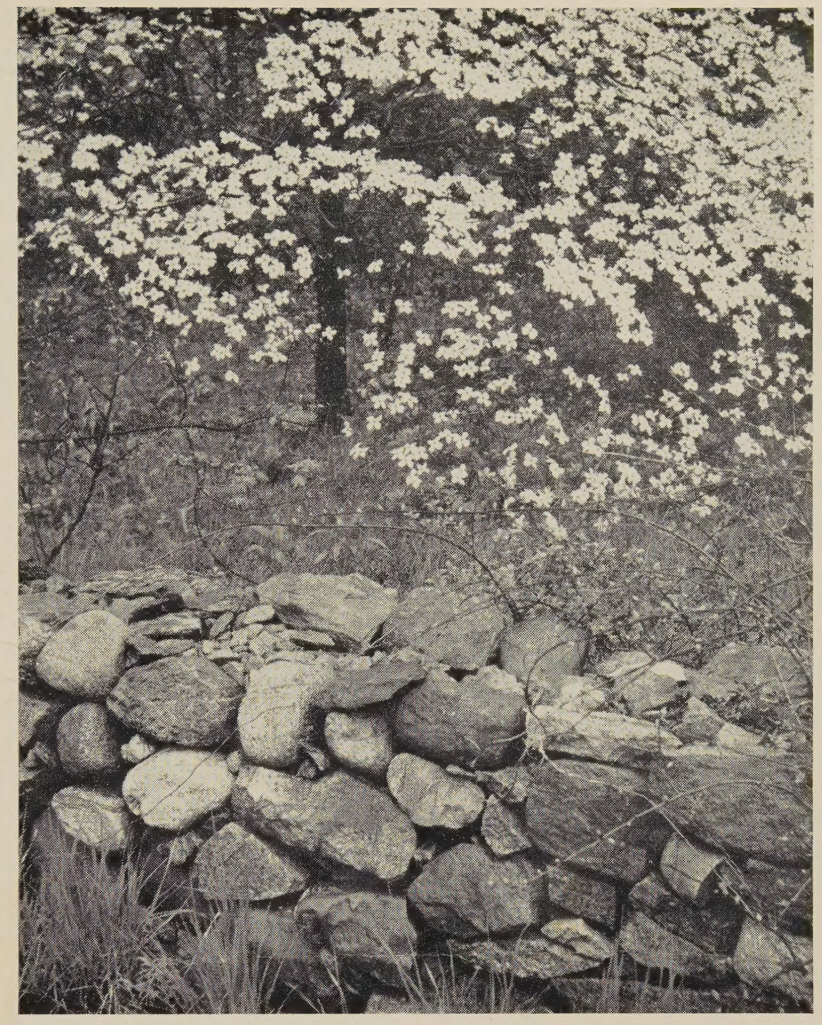
In the Periodicals

The Missionary Herald (Social Action Issue), 287 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. February 1948, publishes "We Promote Rural Life Advancement," by Shirley E. Greene, Agricultural Relations Secretary of the Congregational Christian Council for Social Action. Mr. Greene reports a discussion on the world food situation which he led in a seminar at Randolph, Vt.

In *The Telescope-Messenger,* Harrisburg, Pa., January 31, 1948, a report of three "Rural Life Institutes in the East Ohio Conference," December 9-11, 1947, is given by Hernan Grove, Secretary of the Rural Life Commission. The theme for the institutes was "Christian Education in the Rural Church."

Country Gentleman, Philadelphia, Pa., January 1948, presents a plea for religious education for our children under the title, "Children and Religion," by Harriet Acheson Koch.

The Sunday School Informer, Nashville, Tenn., January and February 1948, contains "With the Rural Church Program," prepared by V. A. Edwards, Director of the Department of Christian Education, Sunday School Board of the National Baptist Convention. In the January issue Mr. Edwards presents a list of items which should be included in a balanced church program. Some of the suggestions given are for home and family; health; recreation; and civic interest. In the February issue announcement was also made of rural leadership conferences to be held during the month of March: at the American Baptist Theological Seminary, Nashville, Tenn., March 9-11, and at Arkansas Baptist College, Little Rock, Ark., March 16-18. The State of Louisiana, under the direction of F. M. Boley and W. H. Buckner, is also planning a state-wide rural leadership project for Grambling College in Louisiana, March 22-26, 1948.



Dogwood and Stone Fence — *A. Devaney, Inc., N. Y.*

The National Christian Council Review, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. December 1947, publishes a report on "A Christian Rural Fellowship Meeting" at Katpadi, India, by R. R. Kaithahn, a rural missionary residing at Kodaikanal, S. I.

In *The Rural New-Yorker,* New York, N. Y., January 17, 1948, the Rev. Andrew A. Burkhardt, a New Jersey rural pastor, tells of the friendly relationship and cooperation existing between him and his sexton under the title, "Pastoral Parson."

In *Shepherds,* Nashville, Tenn., February 1948, Eugene Golay, pastor of the Methodist Church in Red Cloud, Nebraska, makes a plea for an effective program of evangelism in the rural church, and tells how to initiate it, in an article entitled "In Rural Areas." Mr. Golay says, in part, "Rural evangelism must be directed toward the family unit, rather than the individual. It must keep the community in mind and emphasize the Christian's responsibility to his community." The article also stresses the need of longer pastorates.

In *World Call,* Indianapolis, Ind., February 1948, under the title, "Crusading in Town and Country," Edwin L. Becker states the aim of the twelve-day Church Enlargement Crusade in Town and Country of the Disciples of Christ as "an attempt to continue doing a big and long needed job—the building of strong, alert churches in rural America." This Crusade will reach every town and country church possible between July 1 and December 31, 1948 "with a program that will help them

become enlarged and effective units of the kingdom."

The Pastor, Nashville, Tenn., February 1948, contains several articles of interest to those most concerned with the rural church. Among them are: "Will the Tide be Turned?" by Edward B. Brewster, pastor of the Methodist church, Richwood, Ohio, who stresses "basic salary, simplified organization and special training for ministers" as of vital importance in strengthening the rural church. "Creative Summers," by James W. Kennedy, outlines a minister's vacation in terms of recreation and preparation for the year ahead with regular and frequent refresher courses and companionship of fellow clergymen at summer schools and conference centers. "Group Plan in a Rural District," by J. F. McLeod, Jr., is a plea for the participation of lay churchmen in discovering and solving common problems.

The Christian Evangelist, St. Louis, Mo., February 11, 1948, contains an editorial on the church enlargement crusade under the heading, "For the Town and Country Church." The editor says: "During the past ten years the rural population has increased by four million. The Church Enlargement Crusade is a movement back to the source of recruitment for church membership for the ministry and missions and for Bible school teachers in every area of Christian service."

The Mennonite Community, Scottdale, Pa., February 1948, presents "Maintaining The Family Farm," by I. W. Moomaw. The author says that the future of many churches "depends to a large extent upon what happens to the farm home. In turning to the promotion of family farm ownership, the church can perform an invaluable service for youth and at the same time strengthen its own position."

The *Methodist Rural Fellowship Bulletin,* Westminster, Md., Winter 1948, features an account of the organization and program of "The Harrison County (Missouri) Larger Parish," by Marvin Judy.

Southern Rural Life Council

• The Southern Rural Life Council, Nashville, Tenn., is an organization representing various groups and interests concerned with the improvement of rural living. The Council is composed of seventy-five persons from thirteen southern states.

It is sponsored by four Nashville, Tennessee, institutions — Peabody College, Scarritt College, Vanderbilt University, and Fisk University. Its purpose is to utilize available resources—human, institutional, and natural—in developing a comprehensive continuing program of community development.

Within the Council are five working committees; namely, (1) Committee on Education, (2) Committee on Agriculture and Industry, (3) Committee on Health, (4) Committee on the Rural Church, and (5) Committee on Public Relations. The Council, through its director, staff, and committees, cooperates and collaborates with institutions, agencies, and individuals working to improve the equality of rural life in the South.

The Council has held work conferences and published reports as follows: "The Church and Rural Community Living in the South." This includes outstanding illustrations of local community cooperation. "The School and Rural Community Living in the South." Here descriptions are given of activities of schools which are improving the quality of living in the South.

Pacific School of Religion

• The department of Town and Country Church, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, publishes an announcement entitled, "Town and Country Planning." In addition to announcements of courses in the formal curriculum there are many news items on town and country church developments. Among the services rendered will be in-service training and aid to recent graduates who are placed in town and country churches.

Christians Aid in Refugee Camps of India

• The Christian forces in North America are responding to the call of the Relief Committee of the National Christian Council of India for personnel for service among the ten million displaced persons on the border between India and Pakistan.

Missionary doctors, nurses and social workers of all denominations are being released by their boards for emergency work in the Hindu Moslem refugee camps on both sides of the border, where conditions are very serious. Great masses of people are living in hastily constructed camps, and wounds from the rioting, hunger, cold and disease are taking heavy toll among them.

Rural Minister is Recreation Director

• At Monroe, N. H., according to *The Boston Daily Globe,* Rev. William Hudson serves as minister of the Methodist church, and is also the recreation director for the town. He gets $1,500 for preaching the Gospel and $1,000 for promoting recreation events. The town has 450 people.

The town has a low tax rate, no debt, and excellent services. A year ago the town meeting formally voted to engage a recreation director.

Willard De Lue, the reporter, concludes: "It works out beautifully."

Taylor at Wisconsin

• Dr. Carl C. Taylor, Chief of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., will be visiting professor of Rural Sociology during the coming summer session, June 28 to August 29. Dr. Taylor will offer two courses both of which will be open to advanced undergraduate and graduate students. The courses are entitled Rural Social Trends and Rural Cultural Regions.

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Citizens Council for Migrant Labor

Recently, a group of individuals d organizations interested in the oblems of migrant workers in the nited States met in Washington d set up the National Citizens ouncil for Migrant Labor. The ornization grew, in large part, out of e conviction of its founders that less some central agency goes to rk on the problem of the migrant rker and his family, they will be rgotten and neglected in the rush work which always faces both pub- and private agencies.

The National Citizens Council for igrant Labor recognizes that there ust be developed a comprehensive, ng-term farm labor program which ll include the migrant worker. he formulation of such a program ould lessen the need for migrant bor by greater diversification both individual industries and by an ea basis, and by greater use of local bor. Employers and public and ivate agencies and organizations ust all help in making this longrm program possible.

The National Council for Miant Labor is composed of citizens o join in the work of the Council, d of national, state, and local ornizations which affiliate with it. he Council will meet not less than ce a year. The office is at 1751 N eet, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

Dr. Paul Taylor is Honorary airman; Rev. Thomas B. Keehn the Congregational-Christian ouncil for Social Action is Chairan. Among the members are Edith owry and Ellis Marshburn of the ome Missions Council.

Who are the Migrants?

A sizable segment of our populaon, through community and State glect, has been robbed of so many rmal American and human rights at it is almost unbelievable. Child bor, substandard living and a padck against education have destroyd the rights of children and drastilly disturbed the integrity of famy life among migrant workers.

Estimates ranging from one to five illion individuals comprise America's forgotten people of 1948, agricultural and industrial migrants. This equals the populations of from 4 to 12 of our 48 States.

Unorganized, unprotected by workmen's compensation laws in most States, ineligible for educational, health, or welfare benefits while following the elusive dollar during seasonal employment shifts, migrants frequently find maintenance of even a minimum standard of living an impossibility.

—From the Report and Recommendations of the Federal Interagency Committee on Migrant Labor.

Lord's Acre Victory

• A meeting of the trustees of the First Baptist Church of Hampton, Iowa, was called in the spring of 1947 for the purpose of discussing the redecorating of the interior of the church and the repairing and painting of the exterior. From this first meeting definite plans soon began to take form.

At the same time the trustees were engaging painters, carpenters and laborers to accomplish the work, the members of the "Victory Class" were contemplating the Lord's Acre Plan as a means of helping to meet the necessary expenses. Soon arrangements were made for renting twenty-eight acres on shares and two members of the class offered the yield from fields at their farms. Despite the seemingly uncooperative attitude of the weather, the corn was not a failure and, so far, $885.78 have been received from the project.

By September the interior of the church was completed. The walls and ceiling had been washed and painted two coats of ivory with a brown stencil, the pews and woodwork varnished and the floors sanded, varnished and waxed. The weather has hindered the completion of the exterior, but by spring we hope the remaining work will be accomplished.

A surprise birthday party was held in the church parlors December 26 for our teacher, Forrest Yaw. At this time the farmer members of the class were guests of the town people for those on the farms were responsible for the success of the Lord's Acre Plan. The table decorations consisted of the birthday cake, ears of corn and miniature machinery. Special recognition was given to Forrest Yaw for the many hours of labor he gave to assure the success of the plan.

—Mrs. Ralph Kothe

Editor of the Christian Farmer

• The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. announces a plan whereby six "missionaries in reverse" will come from other nations to speak to church audiences during the first half of 1948. One of the six is Sun T'ien Hsi of China, dean of the Shantung Christian University in Tsinan. When Shantung was overrun by Japanese, the school moved inland to refugee quarters. Tsinan itself is under the nationalist government, but two-thirds of the area served by the re-established school is controlled by the Communists.

Dr. Sun has two interests. Like Dr. Sam Higginbottom, he believes that sound farming practice is the base for a sound Christian people. Several years ago he founded "The Christian Farmer," a farm journal which carries practical information and inspiration to rural people all over China. For background, he spent a year (1935-'36) studying agriculture at Cornell.

He is a former secretary of the National Christian Council in China and of the Tsinan Y.M.C.A.

The Rural Church and Michigan State College

• Dr. Orion Ulrey from Michigan State College, East Lansing, Mich., writes: We have set up an all-college committee, "Rural Life and the Church," to give general direction to programs relating to rural church work. The committee consists of representatives from the following departments: Agricultural Economics; Radio Station WKAR; Institute of Short Courses; Home Economics; Institute of Conservation; Sociology; Farm Management; 4-H Club; Adult Education. We believe this is a significant step for an expanding program."

Book Review

Treasury of Religious Plays—Selected and edited by Thelma Brown. Association Press, N. Y. 1947. $3.00. 341 pages.

This book is a praiseworthy answer to many requests which came to Miss Brown in her work of promotion and distribution of Protestant Christian literature. Requests were such as these: for a play that "isn't 'preachy' "; for "an all-make cast"; for a play in a community where "juvenile delinquency led to tragedy"; for a play that would help in the "appreciation of our Christian heritage"; for plays on freedom, peace, race relations; for a play with a "missionary emphasis"; and one that would make the various versions of the Scripture more vital.

Among these plays, all of which are suitable for either rural or city groups, one—"The Builders"—has for a setting the sanctuary of a rural church. This play, by Frances Dyer Eckardt, might encourage a young man to consecrate his life to the rural ministry. Except for one play, these plays (many of which require no royalty) may be presented in from ten to forty minutes; and only one play requires as many as eleven characters. The simplicity or elaborateness of presentation can be determined by the producers.

The editor recognized the value of time for leaders when she inserted a descriptive sentence with each title in the table of contents and indexed the plays according to subject, number of characters, and the time required for performance.

With visual education taking the place it now does in effective religious instruction, Thelma Brown's anthology of twenty plays should receive a wide welcome by civic, school and church leaders.

MRS. DON F. PIELSTICK

Forty Years a Country Preacher

• George Blodgett Gilbert, who died on February 20th at the age of 76, practiced what he preached, and his life of unselfish service will long be remembered.

Born in Randolph, Vt., the son of a farmer, Mr. Gilbert was graduated from Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., and completed his studies at Berkeley Divinity School, New Haven, in 1898.

He then became rector of Christ Protestant Episcopal Church in Middletown, Conn., which parish he served until 1905 when he became missionary to country churches in Middlesex County of that state.

Mr. Gilbert believed that "preaching is by no means the heart and soul of the country church," and that "the essence of Christian ministry is rooted in human relationships." In addition to carrying a living message of the Gospel that his congregation could relate to its daily way of living he was adviser on farm matters and domestic troubles.

He helped farmer friends pitch hay, clipped hair, umpired ball games and took part in all the activities of his folk. In the early days of his ministry he covered his forty-mile Sunday circuit by horse and wagon. Later he used a bicycle, and this was followed by a Model T Ford.

In 1939 *The Christian Herald* and *Harper's Magazine* chose Mr. Gilbert as "The Typical Country Minister of the United States," and asked him to write a book about his work. *Forty Years a Country Preacher* is the result. For many years he contributed a column to *The Rural New-Yorker* under the title, "Pastoral Parson and His Country Folks."

Mr. Gilbert is survived by five children, one of whom (George B. Gilbert, Jr.) is an Episcopal clergyman with many mission stations and a large circuit at Lake City, Minn.

Despite the designation, "typical country minister," those who knew him said there was nothing typical about him. There was only one Gilbert.

PRAYER

O Lord of Mercy, help us to understand the needs of others and to minister to them in Christian love.

A Prayer in Spring

• For rebirth of life in field and forest, for bursting bud and growing grass, for warmth in air, and skies of blue, we thank thee Father. Make our lives as full of promise as this spring day. Give us an inner rebirth as thou dost quicken the earth at its springtime.

—MARK RICH

The Enlarged Town & Country Church

• We have doubled the size of TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH.

The Committee on Town and Country decided to take this step as a venture of faith. Receipts from subscriptions have thus far been sufficient to provide an eight-page but not a sixteen-page journal. The hope is that there will be many interested cooperators who will say so many good words about TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH that we will have enough subscribers, even at the present subscription rate, to carry the venture.

What You Can Do

There is no central promotion fund for TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH. It can only be promoted by the interested boards and agencies and by the ministers themselves. Will you, therefore, take responsibilty for:

1. Asking for circulars and sample copies;
2. Announcing the Journal at ministerial association meetings;
3. Seeing that TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH is announced at all rural church conferences;
4. Sending us material for publication.